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ABSTRACT

Thirty-four preservice teachers listened to children's tape-recorded responses to selected questions. The children were rehearsed to present either relevant and logical (high quality) responses or irrelevant and illogical (low quality) responses. The children also were rehearsed to verbalize either responses that contained selected nonstandard dialectic markers or to verbalize standard English responses. The preservice teachers rated the high quality responses higher than the low quality responses. For most of the high quality responses, the presence or absence of nonstandard dialectic markers did not significantly affect ratings of responses. However, low quality responses that did not contain nonstandard dialectic markers generally were rated higher than low quality responses that contained nonstandard dialectic markers. These findings support conclusions of previous research showing that students' standard English responses are rated generally higher than responses containing black nonstandard dialectic markers. This conclusion implies that preservice teachers tend to rate student responses in much the same ways as experienced teachers reportedly rate student responses. (RL)

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The Interactive Effect of Quality of Student Response and Use of Nonstandard Dialectic Markers on Teacher Perception

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Abstract

Pre-service teachers (n=34) listened to tape-recorded responses of children to selected questions. The children were rehearsed to present either relevant and logical (high quality) responses, or irrelevant and illogical (low quality) responses. The children also were rehearsed to verbalize either responses that contained selected nonstandard dialectic markers or to verbalize standard English responses. The pre-service teachers rated the high quality responses higher than the low quality responses. For most of the high quality responses, the presence or absence of nonstandard dialectic markers did not significantly affect ratings of responses. However, low quality responses that contained no nonstandard dialectic marker generally were rated higher than low quality responses that contained nonstandard dialectic markers. These findings are discussed in relation to related research on the effect of students' use of nonstandard dialect on teacher perceptions.

The Interactive Effect of Quality of Student Response and Use of Nonstandard Dialectic Markers on Teacher Perception

This paper discusses two questions related to student use on nonstandard dialect and pre-service teacher perception of such use: Does student use of nonstandard dialect affect pre-service teachers' perception of student responses? What is the joint effect of quality of student responses and the use of nonstandard dialect on pre-service teachers' perceptions?

Studies such as those by Crowl and MacGinitie (1974), Cunningham (1977), Granger, Matthews, Quay, and Verner (1977), and Piche, Rubin, and Turner (1978) indicate that teachers tend to rate Standard English responses of students higher than student responses that contain black nonstandard dialectic markers. That is, when student task performance is held constant except for the presence or absence of nonstandard dialect, teachers reportedly judge performance exhibiting the use of black nonstandard dialect lower.

The present study differs from those cited above in two ways. First, in an attempt to determine the differential impact of specific nonstandard dialectic markers on ratings of student responses, two particular dialectic markers were focused on. Second, persons currently enrolled in a teacher-training program (pre-service teachers), rather than experienced teachers, evaluated student responses. The use of pre-service teachers provides rationale for recommendations concerning curricula for teacher-training programs.

METHOD

One black seven year old boy and one white seven year old boy were trained to verbalize particular responses to ten selected questions of the Slosson Intelligence Test. Each boy responsed to each question with one answer that was

relatively relevant and logical (high quality response) and one answer that was relatively irrelevant and illogical (low quality response). The white boy used Standard English in his responses and the black boy used at least one of two non-standard dialectic markers in each of his responses (nonstandard use of the verb "to be" and/or nonstandard omission or addition of "s" in noun pluralization or in formation of verbs). These two particular nonstandard markers were chosen because they are frequently used in the speech of many speakers of black non-standard English. The questions and responses are summarized in Table 1.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Thirty-four pre-service teachers enrolled in undergraduate educational psychology courses at Augusta College rated the quality of responses on a scale from 1 to 10 as they listened to the tape-recorded questions and responses. Of the 34 subjects, 14 were majoring in early childhood education, 6 in special education and 14 in middle grades and secondary education. Thirty of the 34 subjects were of Caucasian ancestry. Seventeen of the 34 subjects were randomly assigned to listen to a high quality Standard English response to each question followed by a low quality response containing nonstandard dialectic markers for each of the same questions. The other 17 subjects were assigned to listen to high quality nonstandard English responses followed by low quality standard English responses. Although assignment to groups was random, care was taken to insure an approximately equal number of early childhood, special education, middle grades and secondary education majors in each group. The 34 subjects were not given a rationale for rating the quality of responses, other than the fact that the experimenters wished to learn more

about how teachers rated responses of students.

RESULTS

A between-within two-factor mixed design was used to analyze the ratings of student responses. The between-subjects variable was dialect (standard vs. nonstandard). The within-subjects variable was based on the quality of student response (high vs. low). That is, for each of the 10 questions, each of the 34 pre-service teachers rated the quality of two responses, one response being relatively relevant and logical (high quality) and the other response being less relevant and logical (low quality). An analysis of variance was performed on each of 11 dependent variables: the ratings for responses to each of the 10 questions, and the combined totals for the ratings for responses to all 10 questions.

Ths means and standard deviations for the experimental conditions with the combined totals of ratings as the dependent variable are shown in Table 2. For the same dependent variable, Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of variance.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Insert Table 3 about here

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As seen in Tables 2 and 3, ratings favored Standard English responses over nonstandard dialectic responses, although the main effect due to dialect was

not significant at the .05 level. As expected, high quality responses were rated higher than low quality responses ($p < .0001$). The most interesting result is that the interaction between dialect and quality of response was significant ($p < .05$). This is due primarily to the relatively low ratings given to low quality nonstandard dialect responses as compared to the higher ratings given to low quality Standard English responses.

Treating ratings of responses to each of the 10 questions as dependent variables, the main effect due to quality of response was significant ($p < .0001$) in favor of high quality response over low quality response for all 10 questions. The main effect due to dialect was significant ($p < .05$) in favor of Standard English over nonstandard dialect for questions 6 and 10. The interaction between quality of response and dialect was significant ($p < .05$) for questions 2,3,5 and 9, with similar trends toward interaction for the other six questions that did not reach the .05 level of significance.

No clear-cut trends were found concerning the effect on ratings of the particular two dialectic markers studied, but responses that contained more than one instance of the use of nonstandard dialectic markers were rated generally lower than responses that contained only one instance of the use of such markers.

DISCUSSION

Caution should be exercised in interpreting these results, because the pre-service teachers were always presented a high quality response followed by its corresponding low quality response. Ratings of low quality responses may be somewhat different if such responses are not preceded by corresponding high quality responses. Because of this methodological problem, this study should be viewed only as a pilot study which may provide clues for future research.

Bearing this caution in mind, the results of this study support conclusions of previous research showing that Standard English student responses are rated generally higher than responses containing black nonstandard dialectic markers. This implies that pre-service teachers tend to rate student responses in much the same ways as experienced teachers reportedly rate student responses. Of particular interest is the interaction between dialect and quality of response. The ratings of responses were not significantly affected by the presence or absence of nonstandard dialect unless the quality of the response, in terms of its relevance and logic, was low.

It should be noted that Slosson Intelligence Test items are scored as pass or fail (rather than on a scale from 1 to 10), so that no claims can be made that children with poor quality responses would have lower scores if their responses contained nonstandard dialect markers rather than Standard English. However, teachers and teacher trainees should be made aware of results of studies such as the present one, since they seem to rate certain responses according to the way students respond rather than in terms of the substantive content of the responses.

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TABLE 1

Responses to Questions

1. Why do you have to take a bath?

   HQSE: I take a bath to get clean.
   HQNSE: I be take a bath to get clean.
   LQSE: I take a bath to play with my two boats.
   LQNSE: I be take a bath to play with my two boat.

2. Where is your heel?

   HQSE: My heel is on the back part of my foot.
   HQNSE: My heel be on the back part of my foots.
   LQSE: My heel is on my bottom.
   LQNSE: My heel be on my bottom.

3. Why do we have clocks?

   HQSE: We have clocks to tell time.
   HQNSE: We be having clock to tell time.
   LQSE: We have clocks to tick-tock.
   LQNSE: We be having clock to tick-tock.

4. How is a crayon different from a pencil?

   HQSE: A crayon is made of wax. A pencil is made of lead.
   HQNSE: A crayon be made of wax. A pencil be made of lead.
   LQSE: They both write.
   LQNSE: They be writing.

5. What is a forest made of?

   HQSE: A forest is made of trees and animals.
   HQNSE: A forest be made of tree and animal.
   LQSE: A forest is made of Indians.
   LQNSE: A forest be made of Indian.

Note: HQSE - High Quality Standard English
HQNSE - High Quality Nonstandard English
LQSE - Low Quality Standard English
LQNSE - Low Quality Nonstandard English

TABLE 1 (continued)

6. How is milk different from water?

HQSE: They taste differently.
HQNSE: They be taste differently.
LQSE: They both are wet.
LQNSE: They be wet.

7. In what way are a cat and a dog the same or alike?

HQSE: Both cats and dogs are animals.
HQNSE: Both cat and dog be animal.
LQSE: A dog barks, and a cat says meow.
LQNSE: A dog bark, and a cat say meow.

8. How many days are in a week?

HQSE: There are seven days in a week.
HQNSE: There be seven day in a week.
LQSE: There are twelve days in a week.
LQNSE: There be twelve day in a week.

9. How many egge are in a dozen?

HQSE: There are twelve eggs in a dozen.
HQNSE: There be twelve egg in a dozen.
LQSE: There are twenty eggs in a dozen.
LQNSE: There be twenty egg in a dozen.

10. What do we mean by infection?

HQSE: An infection is a sore.
HQNSE: An infection be a sore.
LQSE: What's that?
LQNSE: What that be?

TABLE 2

Group Means and Standard Deviations of Ratings

	High Quality Response	Low Quality Response
High Quality Standard English	$\bar{x}$ = 86.47	$\bar{x}$ = 19.12
and then	N = 17	N = 17
Low Quality Nonstandard English	sd = 5.57	sd = 9.58
High Quality Nonstandard English	$\bar{x}$ = 84.88	$\bar{x}$ = 30.35
and then	N = 17	N = 17
Low Quality Standard English	sd = 16.28	sd = 13.03

TABLE 3

Results of the Analysis

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Between - Subjects	33	4055.12	____	
A (Presence or absence of nonstandard dialectic markers)	1	395.53	395.53	3.46*
Error: Between - Subjects	32	3659.59	114.36	
Within - Subjects	34	69098	____	
B (Quality or Response)	1	63135.06	63135.06	383.80***
A x B	1	698.88	698.88	4.25**
Error: Within - Subjects	32	5264.06	164.50	

* $p \geq .05$
** $p < .05$
*** $p < .0001$